



There's something magical about bleeding hearts in the spring garden. Those delicate, heart-shaped flowers dangling in the breeze? They almost look like they belong in a fairytale.

Bleeding hearts (*Dicentra spectabilis*) are a shade-loving perennial that show up in early spring, even as snow still falls in the garden. They thrive in rich, well-drained soil and prefer afternoon shade. They're a perfect addition to woodland gardens or tucked amongst ferns and hostas.

One important thing to note – bleeding hearts go dormant once the heat of summer kicks in. Plant them alongside other shade loving perennials, such as hostas or astilbe. They'll quickly fill the space after your bleeding hearts fade, keeping your garden beautiful all season long.

Article and photo by: Liz Will

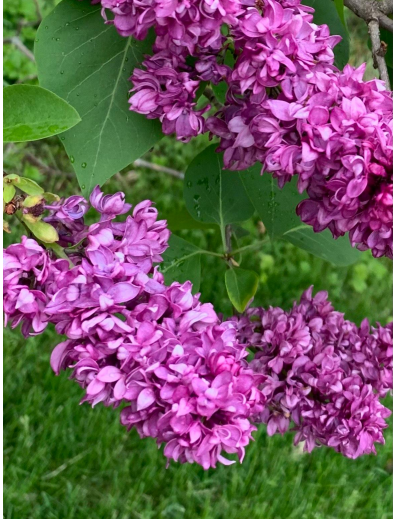
The Oakland Gardener

April 2025

Monthly Plant Feature

Article and photos by: Liz Will

There are few things as nostalgic in the late spring garden as the sweet scent of lilacs. A light breeze, and suddenly the scent takes you back to childhood, picking handfuls of blooms and bringing that sweet



fragrance indoors.

Lilacs (*Syringa vulgaris*) are tough, reliable and easy to grow, making them a favorite in gardens for generations. They thrive in full sun and well-draining soil and put on quite a show of delicate purple blooms from mid to late spring. Once established, they're incredibly low maintenance, requiring an occasional pruning to keep them in shape.

One of the best things about lilacs? They can live for decades. If you've ever seen a large, mature lilac bush or two on an old historic street, you know exactly what I mean. They offer beauty, fragrance, and a sense of history to any garden.

If you want blooms to last even longer, plant early, mid-season, and late-blooming varieties. Or consider a reblooming lilac, such as 'Bloomstruck,' although the flowers will be notably smaller. If space is tight, dwarf varieties make it possible to enjoy lilacs in smaller gardens or even containers.



With their unmatched fragrance, timeless beauty, and incredible resilience, lilacs have earned their place as a garden favorite. Whether planted as a privacy hedge or a compact variety in a small space, they bring a touch of old-fashioned charm to any landscape, year after year.

Extension Master Gardener News



EMG Project Site - The Finlandia Gardens

Finlandia Gardens, located within the Finnish Center Association (FCA) in Farmington Hills, Michigan, is a six-acre community garden dedicated to sustainable gardening and environmental education. Established in 2004, the gardens have expanded to include over sixty distinct areas, such as succulent gardens, a water feature, sculptures, a gazebo, and a Wedding Garden.

The mission of Finlandia Gardens is to provide opportunities for volunteering, learning, and community engagement while caring for native flora and fauna in an environmentally responsible manner. The gardens welcome individuals of all ages and experience levels to participate in various activities, including planting, harvesting, pruning, seed collection, invasive species removal, composting, and woodworking projects.

Finlandia Gardens collaborates with local schools, scout troops, and organizations to host educational programs and projects. Notably, in August 2019, Boy Scouts from Farmington Troop 179 initiated an Eagle Scout project to build a trail through the FCA wetland, enhancing accessibility and promoting environmental awareness.

The gardens have received several accolades for their beautification and environmental efforts since 2006, from organizations such as the Beautification Commission of Farmington Hills and the Rouge River Environmental Council. Additionally, Finlandia Gardens is certified by Michigan State University as a location for Master Gardeners to fulfill their yearly service hours and is recognized as an Urban Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

Finlandia Gardens is open daily from dawn until dusk, inviting visitors to explore its diverse landscapes and learn about sustainable gardening practices. For those interested in volunteering or supporting the gardens, please contact David Sharpe, Landscape and Volunteer Coordinator, at dcs37mgsc@earthlink.net or 248-977-1337.

For more information, visit [Finlandia Gardens' official website](#).

Gardening Tips and Tricks



Libraries Are Not Just for Books!

Article and photos by: Jamiel Dado

We all know that libraries are amazing places to check books out, but did you know that you can get free seeds from them as well? Several libraries across Oakland County offer seeds to the public, and what better time to utilize that service

than now. It is important to point out that because these seeds are supplied by the community, for the community, there is no way to regulate the nature of the seeds themselves, so be aware of some possible risk, such as plant diseases, that may be present. That said, if you are looking for a free resource to start your growing, these are great places to begin!

Royal Oak Library

Limited to four packets per person, the Royal Oak program requests that you please harvest some seeds from the plants that you grow to return back to

the library at the end of the growing season. In addition to seeds, they offer a “propagation station” that has numerous cuttings that are available to trade. By bringing in a preferably rooted cutting from one of your houseplants, you can trade in for one of their cuttings. This is a great way to grow your plant collection without having to spend any money!

Southfield Library

Southfield’s program is located on the second floor of their library and requires no library card! A limit of three packets per visit and no more than fifteen per season is requested. As with Royal Oak, their hope is for you to harvest seeds from the plants you grow and return them for future use.

Farmington Community Library

Farmington’s seed library is limited to five packets per family, and like the other programs, encourages you to return with seeds that you harvest from the plants you grow. Their website has a terrific directory of seeds offered with helpful information about what you will be growing.

Chances are, wherever you reside, your local library will have one of these incredible programs for you to take advantage of. If you are having any difficulty locating one near you, try utilizing the **Michigan Seed Library Network**, which has a rather useful map to help you in your efforts.



Gardening Deep Dive



Saying Goodbye to your Lawn and Saying Hello to More Garden

Article and photos by: Jamiel Dado

When it comes to gardening, few topics bring about such heated emotions as when talking about the need for lawns. Some love them like their children, while others can’t get rid of them fast enough. When I first moved into my house, I initially fell into the former camp. I spent a considerable amount of time making my lawn weed free and lush. The more I got into gardening, however, I started feeling that grass was the least interesting thing that I could grow on my property and started removing sections of it to make way for planting beds. In the span of three seasons, I found that I no longer had a back lawn at all and that my front lawn consisted of a three-foot-wide path that curved around expansive flower beds. While this extreme removal might feel right for some, others may want to have a bit more space for planting. Whatever your final vision might be, it all begins with removing the grass, and knowing the different ways in which to do that.

Physical Removal

Although this method is instantly gratifying, it is

also the most labor intensive. I removed all of my lawn with a Hori Hori Garden knife and a mini digging shovel. Of course, I was only removing it one bed at a time, so it wasn't as bad as it could have been. Local stores have sod cutters that are available for purchase or rental and would make quicker work of a larger removal project. Once you have stripped away the sod, you are left with the question of what to do with it. If you have lawn waste removal, you can bag it up and say goodbye to it, but it is worth pointing out that freshly cut sod is quite heavy and it is worth drying it out for several days and shaking out as much soil as you can before you do so. Also, don't forget to use some for your compost if that is something you do on your property.



Solarization

The process of **solarization** is much easier than ripping out the grass by hand but requires a lot more time and doesn't look very pretty while you are doing it. That said, if time isn't important and you just want an easier way to go, this is a great option. Right at the beginning of summer, mow the grass as low as possible and water thoroughly. Then using black polyethylene, cover the area you wish to solarize and hold in place using rocks or stakes. This should be left for between four and eight weeks. When finished, all the grass should be killed, and you are ready to plant. You can either remove the dead grass or work it in as organic material. A benefit of this process is that it will not only take care of the grass, but also some plant disease and pathogens in the soil. Unfortunately, it will also kill off any beneficial insects that are present.



Sheet Mulching

Sheet Mulching might take the most time of these options, but it might also be the easiest. Using newspaper or cardboard, simply cover the area of grass you plan on removing, then, cover that with compost and mulch. Over time, the base layer will decompose and leave you with a healthy bed that is ready to plant up. This method is perfect to start the year before you plan on using the bed.

No matter which method you end up using, it is worthwhile to get **soil sample** tested so you know what you're working with. Hopefully, you will love what you created, allowing yourself to garden more and mow less.

Gardening for Health and Wellness

Gardening For Health and Wellness

Article by: Pat Wilson

Photos by: Brie Arthur via JoeGardener.com and Dana Gallagher via BH&G Small-Space Gardens Magazine



Dig your hands into the soil, and you're not just planting seeds—you're cultivating health, strength, and a deeper connection with nature. The scent of fresh earth, the rustling of leaves in the breeze, and the vibrant colors of blooming flowers all work together to create an immersive experience that nurtures both body and mind. Gardening is a **full-body workout**, a stress reliever, and a sanctuary for the senses, offering a path to health and well-

being that extends far beyond the garden bed.

Feel the stretch as you reach for a ripe tomato, the resistance as you push a shovel into the soil, and the rhythmic motion of raking leaves. Gardening strengthens muscles, improves flexibility, and boosts cardiovascular health. The fresh air invigorates, while the warm sun on your skin enhances vitamin D production, supporting strong bones and immunity. As your hands work the soil, your mind unwinds—cortisol levels drop, stress melts away, and a sense of calm takes root.

Physical Benefits of Gardening:

- Strength & Endurance – Digging and lifting engage muscles, improving tone and stamina.
- Flexibility & Mobility – Bending and stretching keep joints limber and reduce stiffness.
- Heart Health – Activities like pushing wheelbarrows and mowers raise heart rate and support circulation.
- Weight Management – Gardening burns 200–400 calories per hour, aiding weight control.
- Hand Strength & Dexterity – Planting and pruning improve grip strength and fine motor skills.
- Blood Pressure – Lowers cortisol promoting heart health.

Healing Power of Plants

Step into a garden, and you step into a world of natural medicine. Plants not only beautify spaces but also cleanse the air, providing fresh oxygen and filtering out toxins. The presence of greenery improves focus, reduces fatigue, and fosters a sense of serenity. By choosing plants that nourish both body and mind, gardeners create an environment that supports overall well-being.

Nourishing the Body and Mind

There's nothing quite like the taste of a freshly picked strawberry, warmed by the sun and bursting with sweetness. Growing your own food ensures access to nutrient-rich produce. Kale, tomatoes, blueberries, and carrots brim with vitamins and antioxidants that support immunity, heart health, brain function, and vision. Beyond nutrition, edible gardens engage the senses—sun-ripened berries tempt the taste buds, the scent of rosemary lingers on fingertips, and the gentle rustling of bean vines soothes the mind.

Medicinal Herbs Benefits

Some plants do more than feed the body—they heal it. The warm, spicy scent of ginger invigorates, while chamomile's delicate fragrance signals relaxation. Basil aids digestion, lavender eases stress, and peppermint soothes headaches. Herbal gardens provide a natural pharmacy, offering remedies straight from the earth.

Sensory Gardens: Engaging the Senses

Close your eyes and listen—the whispering of ornamental grasses, the soft hum of bees flitting from flower to flower. Sensory gardens offer a multi-dimensional experience, engaging sight, smell, touch, and sound to promote relaxation and

mindfulness. Vibrant irises and golden lilies provide a visual feast, while feathery ferns and velvety lamb's ear invite touch. The fragrance of blooming jasmine mingles with the earthy scent of damp soil, grounding the senses and creating a peaceful retreat.

Conclusion

Gardening is more than an activity—it's a full-body, full-sensory experience that nourishes, heals, and restores. Whether growing fresh produce, cultivating medicinal herbs, or creating a sanctuary for the senses, gardening transforms both the landscape and the gardener. By embracing sustainable gardening practices, individuals cultivate spaces that support personal health, strengthen ecosystems, and foster a deeper appreciation for the natural world.

Step into a garden, and you step into a world of wellness—one rooted in movement, mindfulness, and the healing power of nature.



Smart Gardening is MSU Extension's campaign using earth-friendly messages to help gardeners make smart choices in their own backyards. The goal is to equip gardeners with a "tool kit" of research-based knowledge to use immediately at home. Whether choosing plants, using garden chemicals, fertilizer or applying water, gardeners need to understand the long-term impacts on their communities. For more Smart Gardening information click [here](#).



Ask Extension

Call the MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline at 1-888-678-3464 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am to noon)

Upcoming Events

Jump into Spring with us!

SPRING OPEN HOUSE

APRIL 25th - 27th



Bordine's SPRING Open House

Locations:

Rochester Hills, Clarkston, Grand Blanc, Brighton

Cost: FREE

Jump into SPRING with us & help us celebrate the season at our SPRING OPEN HOUSE!

Friday • Saturday • Sunday
APRIL 25th through 27th • All 4 locations

Spectacular Sales! Seminars! Food Trucks! Popcorn!
Gift Card Giveaways! Kids Area!

**For more information visit
website**

Introductory Backyard Fruit Online Course

Visit our website for
more information and to
register:

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/
courses/backyard-fruit-101](https://www.canr.msu.edu/courses/backyard-fruit-101)



Backyard Fruit 101

MSU Extension now has a completely online, self-paced, introductory course on **Backyard Fruit 101**. Learn how you can contribute to the Smart Gardening principles of creating healthy soils and plants, while enjoying the health benefits of growing and eating fresh fruit.

In this course, Consumer Horticulture Educators, Brent Crain, Rebecca Krans, David Lowenstein, and Nate Walton cover all the basics of growing backyard fruit.

It consists of six different units focusing on the following:

- Introduction to growing fruit
- Apples & pome fruits
- Strawberries and blueberries
- Brambles
- Grapes
- Unusual fruit

All aspects of fruit growing, such as getting started, soil preparation, planning, variety selection, pruning, pest management and various maintenance activities are discussed. Over 6 hours of video instruction, activities, and additional resources are available. Qualifies for 6 educational credit hours for Extension Master Gardeners.



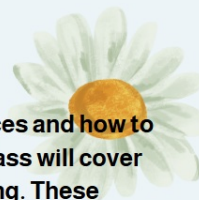
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Bowers Farm Upcoming Garden Workshop Series

GARDENING WORKSHOPS

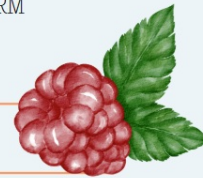
Join Kate to learn about regenerative gardening practices and how to implement them in your own vegetable garden. Each class will cover a different topic and incorporate some hands-on learning. These workshops are designed for adults. New and experienced gardeners will enjoy expanding their knowledge and getting their hands dirty.



👉 SATURDAYS 10:00 - 11:30 AM @ BOWERS SCHOOL FARM

MARCH 8

Growing Raspberries



MARCH 22

Seed Starting



APRIL 5

Intro to Gardening

MAY 10

Building Healthy Soil

JUNE 7

Pruning & Trellising



JUNE 28

Organic Pest Management

JULY 19

Vegetable Harvesting Tips & Tricks



AUGUST 16

Garlic Braiding

SEPTEMBER 6

Harvesting and Designing Bouquets

OCTOBER 25

Planting & Growing Garlic



👉 Taught by Kate Debs, Agriculture Production Coordinator
kdebs@bloomfield.org

Save The Date!

MGSOC 11th Annual Educational Gardening Conference Gardening and All That Jazz – Garden Potpourri

Keynote speakers:

Bob Iames • Charlie Nardozi • Stacey Hirvela • Susan Martin

Saturday, April 26, 2025 from 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

The Oakland Center, Oakland University, 312 Meadow Brook Rd., Rochester, MI 48309

NEW LOCATION! Four great speakers – four outstanding presentations!

Come to our 11th Annual Educational Conference for new and experienced gardeners – you need not be a Master Gardener to attend! Register on Eventbrite here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gardening-and-all-that-jazz-garden-potpourri-tickets-1135574757669>

For complete information, and to download an application and pay by check, visit our website at <https://mgsoc.org/educational-conference/>

Sponsored by Piechnik's Garden Gate, Proven Winners® and the Greater Detroit Jazz Society.



Master Gardener Society of Oakland County, Inc.

AFFILIATED WITH MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Our conference includes continental breakfast, lunch and beverages, shopping our unique vendors, and the *Scott Gwinnell Trio* performing during lunch. Registration is limited to 300 so don't delay, deadline to purchase tickets is Monday, April 14, 2025.

Visit our



The Meadow Brook Garden Club Monthly Meeting

Friday, April 25, 2025, at Meadow Brook Hall, 350
Estate Dr.,
Rochester MI 48309-1904

Coffee and refreshments will be served at 9:15 a.m. with the program to follow at 10:00 a.m. featuring guest speaker, Dr. Tony Reznicek, Professor Emeritus University of Michigan, who will present "Patagonia -- From Giant Trees to Tiny Cushions." Join us as Dr. Reznicek takes us on a photo tour through the varied climate and vegetation zones of South America's southernmost country, where he will highlight striking and interesting plants both for their use in the garden and for their remarkable form.

Guests are welcome and reservations are not required. There is a \$5 non-member fee. For more information, call 248-364-6210, email MBGCmembers@gmail.com

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Website

Michigan State University
Student Horticulture Association
presents

THE 37TH ANNUAL SPRING SHOW
&
PLANT SALE
IN
THE EMERALD GARDEN OF OZ

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025
9:00AM - 6:00PM

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2025
10:00AM - 4:00PM



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East Lansing, MI 48824

Save the Dates!
April 18-19 2026
April 24-25 2027

Michigan State University
Tollgate Farm and Education Center

Hanami Picnic

Sunday, May 4, 2025
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Sakura Garden

Japanese Music, Food, Crafts and Gift Items



Event Sponsors



Scan here for tickets

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center - 28115 Meadowbrook Road Novi, MI 48377. 248-347-3860

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MICHIGAN NATIVE PLANT SALE

Bowers School Farm
Online Pre-Sales begin in early March.

Help us support our local ecosystems with native plants in your garden this year! Join Bowers School Farm and East Michigan Native Plants for our 2025 Michigan Native Plant Sale. We have a wide variety of grasses and wildflowers for purchase.

Pick-up is on Sunday, May 17, 2025, from 10 am - 2 pm during Open Barn. All proceeds from the Michigan Native Plant Sale will support the Master Gardeners of Oakland County who volunteer to provide our horticultural gardens.

News You Can Use



Ringling in spring with a peep! Getting to know the spring peeper

Paige Filice and Alexa Warwick, Michigan State University Extension - March 19, 2025

Don't be fooled by its small stature—Michigan's smallest frog also happens to be the loudest.

Amphibians are a fascinating group of critters that become active as the weather warms in spring. Amphibians include salamanders and frogs/toads. We have 10 salamander species and 13 frog/toad species in Michigan. One of the characteristics that make amphibians so interesting is their two-phase life cycle—shifting from water as babies to land as adults—at least for most species!

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More**



Leadership, democracy, and the lessons we can learn from nature

Bethany Prykucki, Michigan State University Extension -

March 19, 2025

- Leadership isn't just about guiding organizations: it shapes our communities and democracy. In a democratic society, we don't just observe leadership; we choose it. By voting, we help select leaders who represent our interests, solve problems, and uphold shared values.

Strong leadership, whether in government or organizations, requires communication, collaboration, and the ability to bring people together.

**Read
More**



Lead concerns for gardeners: Mitigating risk

[Barslund Judd, Nathaniel Walton](#) and [Brent Crain, Michigan State University Extension](#) -

March 17, 2025

Updated from an original article written by Abi Saeed.

Lead naturally occurs in small quantities in the soil. Additional factors such as pollutants and lead-contaminated products can increase the concentration of this **highly toxic metal** to levels that can be hazardous. In Flint, Michigan, **irrigation with lead-contaminated water** did not show a significant increase in soil lead levels. Still, the lead already present in soils can persist for long periods. It is important to consider **previous land use** in your gardening plans.

[Read More](#)



What's eating my viburnums and how can I stop it?

[David Lowenstein, Michigan State University Extension](#) -

March 17, 2025

Updated from an original article written by Mary Wilson, Irene Donne, and Dave Smitley.

Not all viburnums are equally appealing to Viburnum Leaf Beetle.

Larvae hatch from overwintering eggs in May. The emerging larvae are greenish-yellow and feed gregariously on the underside of tender newly expanding viburnum leaves, skeletonizing the foliage. Damage usually starts on the lower leaves with only the midribs and major veins left intact.

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